

TITLE	St Crispins School Autism Unit
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 28 July 2016
WARD	Wescott
DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director of Children's Services
LEAD MEMBER	Charlotte Haitham Taylor, Executive Member for Children's Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities have access to an appropriate, sustainable range of facilities within the borough.

That services represent good value for money, so achieving the best community outcomes within the limits of available resources.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That authority to determine the decision on the creation of the St Crispins Autism unit for high performing children from 1 September 2017 is delegated to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Children's Services;
- 2) That the following are also agreed by Executive:
 - a) a permanent entry from Rances Lane to a new car park on the school site, when required to support school expansion;
 - b) future capital investment from 2018/19 to complete the Autism unit in a timely manner;
 - c) to approve the allocation of section 106 receipts required to fund the 'St Crispin's - New Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit and Sixth Form block' as approved in the medium term financial plan for 2016/17.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The St Crispins scheme is for the development of a new Special Education Needs (SEN) Resource unit for high performing children with Autism serving approximately 25 pupils. It entails the relocation of the existing sixth form to a new building and the redevelopment of the sixth form buildings as the Autism unit. It will support children who currently must be educated outside of the borough because there is no equivalent provision here. These children and young people are able to follow the national curriculum, but their impairment prevents them functioning in a mainstream school, without the additional support a resource unit can provide. The out of borough provision is more expensive and for many children less satisfactory than the current proposal because it either entails a lengthy car journey to reach it or is residential.

The school governing body is committed to the scheme, provided they have formal reassurance that a number of associated issues (relating to site access and funding) are

resolved in principle by the Council.

St Crispins School premises are fully utilised, so the creation of the unit requires a new building. To ensure the best fit with educational requirements the scheme is for the new Autism unit to be developed in the current Sixth Form centre and the existing sixth form to be relocated to a new building. The new sixth form building has been designed to facilitate future expansion. At that point additional car parking will be required. The land in front of the main school has been entirely developed as parking space, so any new car parking required at the point of expansion will need to be elsewhere on the site. The least disruptive way of making this provision is through use of a new entrance from Rances Lane, through the current Westmead site using part of the school site adjacent to the new science block. To safeguard the future expansion plans it is proposed to formally commit the council to this future access (in the event of school expansion) at this stage. The Westmead day centre is currently used by Optalis and any additional use, while they are in occupation, will be agreed with them to ensure there is no conflict of interests. Internal discussions with the relevant sections of the council responsible for services here (health and wellbeing) and for future land use (strategic assets) indicate that this proposal is supported. The use of this site is limited to road access only and if this were to be developed while the current Optalis service is in operation use of the road would only be permitted at times when it does not conflict with day centre activity.

Funding for the Autism unit and sixth form centre (and associated MUGA (required to meet planning requirements to compensate for the loss of playing field area)) has been agreed as part of the Council's capital allocations. Immediate needs can be funded, but as part of cost saving exercise during the development of the scheme the works to the first floor of the Autism unit were omitted. The development of this area is not required for the first two years of the units operation (while numbers are growing) and it is proposed to complete the conversion of this area before the third year of the resource unit's operation. The works are internal re-organisation and refurbishment so can be completed in the April to end August period before the new academic year commences. The current estimated budget is in the order of £350K. This is raised through this report rather than through the normal finance reports to ensure that the formal commitment is obtained in tandem with the school organisation approval.

The proposed changes to SEN provision at mainstream maintained schools are prescribed changes under the Education and Inspection Act 2006. As such they require a formal process to be followed before they can be approved. The process involves a formal notice (in a prescribed format, published in a prescribed manner on the Council's website and in a local paper), a 4 week period for representations and a formal Council decision.

The Notice was published as follows

St Crispins – publication 24th June 2016 representations by 22nd July 2016

The school had informally consulted with parents in 2015.

Local schools were informed of the need for a new Autism unit and asked if they wished host such a unit in 2014. St Crispins School put itself forward, on the basis of the adoption of the current proposal. St Crispins has a strong commitment to the inclusion of children with additional needs and this proposal therefore makes a good fit with the school's ethos.

Background

The opening of a new Autism unit for high performing children has been a long standing ambition of the council. Capital funding has been agreed and carried over from the 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years to support this project. St Crispins School have agreed to host the unit and have identified a suitable location (the current sixth form buildings). In order to facilitate this, the sixth form will be relocated to a new building, one that is both fit for purpose and designed to support future school expansion.

The secondary provision strategy is to be renewed this year. Although immediate needs can be met through the Bohunt Wokingham School, additional places may be required, as the pace of SDL build out increases. In this case St Crispins is likely to be a candidate for school expansion, as it has sufficient site area and is located near both North and South Wokingham SDLs.

Analysis of Issues

Changes to mainstream maintained school SEN provision are prescribed changes under the Education and Inspection Act 2006. As such they require a formal process to be followed.

This includes:

- Formal publication of proposals in a prescribed format and media (website and local paper) (appendix one).
- A four week representation period
- A formal decision by the local authority

The St Crispins works require capital expenditure and planning consent. Both have been given (the scheme is funded from budgets carried forward from the 2015/16 financial year and planning consent was awarded in May 2016).

Financial breakdown

Budget title as per MTFP and 10 year vision	2016/17		Total
	MTFP Approved Budget 16/17	C/Fwd. from 15/16	
Expenditure			
Investment in Special Education Needs Provision		2,336	2,336
Basic Needs Secondary - Additional Places		1,000	1,000
Total	0	3,336	3,336

Funded by			
Borrowing		68	68
Capital Maintenance Grant		270	270

Schools Basic Need Grant		1,042	1,042
Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)		1,956	1,956
Total	0	3,336	3,336

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£2.4m Capital	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0.9m Capital	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There are no revenue implications for the General Fund. The proposal is intended to have a positive impact on the High Needs component of the Dedicated Schools Grant through lower cost in authority placements.

The executive are asked to approve the use of S106 contributions secured, towards the funding of the St Crispin's New Autistim Unit and Sixth Form block and associated works project up to the value of the project budget.

The initial budget was approved in the 2014 /15 medium term financial plan. The carry forward was approved in 2016/17. Since 2015/16 S106 approvals have been in conjunction with the schemes in the medium term financial plan. This approval will not change the budget for the project only how it is funded.

- S106 funding received to date - £1,603,542.

Remainder of S106 funding will be released to project as and when received

Capital costs for these works have already been approved, with the exception of the £350K estimated works for the future completion of the Autism unit. Funding for this component of the scheme is recorded in the MTFP in 2018/19.

Cross-Council Implications

N/A

List of Background Papers

N/A

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Date 18 July 2017	Version No. 1.0

Appendix One

Statutory Notice under Part 2 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

School: St Crispins School, London Road, Wokingham, RG40 1SS

Proposer: Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

Proposal: The opening of a new unit for up to 25 pupils aged 11 to 18 with high functioning Autism at the school from 1st September 2017. It is expected that the unit will be able to accommodate up to 5 pupils in the first year of operation and that capacity will increase annually until the full number of places are available.

Publication date: 24th June 2016

Last date for receipt of representations: 12 noon 22nd July 2016

Address for representations: Wokingham Borough Council, Children's Services, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN (FAO Piers Brunning, Service Manager Strategy Policy and Partnerships).

Or by email to: piers.brunning@wokingham.gov.uk

Full Notice published on the Council's website at: <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools-information/> (heading "School Organisation").